



Media Release

State Water Board Issues Water Quality Permit Needed To Begin Initial High-Speed Rail Construction

For Immediate Release:

March 14, 2013

Contact:

George Kostyrko
(916) 341-7365

SACRAMENTO – High-speed rail construction between Madera and Fresno is one step closer, following approval by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) of a plan that addresses water quality impacts during construction and roadway projects.

The State Water Board approved a permit called a “[401 certification](#),” a federal Clean Water Act requirement to ensure that any debris or contaminants that wash away in storm water during construction projects are captured and not allowed to pollute other nearby waterways.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) needs environmental permit approval from several agencies before construction can start. The California High-Speed Rail Project will eventually connect San Francisco and Los Angeles over a distance of 800 miles, including extensions to Sacramento and San Diego. The first phase begins in the Central Valley.

“This approval allows this important rail modernization project to begin, while ensuring that environmental impacts to nearby waterways are minimized or captured,” said State Water Resources Control Board Executive Director Tom Howard. The permit was approved by the State Water Board on March 12.

The permit focuses on impacts to aquatic resources and storm water runoff, and impacts on outlying or nearby surface water bodies, both during construction and in the post construction phase of the project. To gain approval, the Authority submitted a mitigation plan that describes how impacts to surface waters on the construction site will be addressed, including restoring vernal pools and riparian habitat at an off-site location in Madera and Merced counties.

The mitigation plan was approved by the State Water Board, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

For background on the State Water Boards authority relative to storm water runoff, please visit: www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/stormwater/docs/stormwater_factsheet.pdf

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